

# CALIFORNIA LATINO CAUCUS



## LATINO LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS



Volume 2, Edition 3 — May 2008

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## A Celebration of Latino Heritage in California



On May 5, 2008, the California Legislature honored fourteen amazing leaders in a celebration of Latino Heritage in California. Renowned entertainers, educators, a Hall-of-Fame football player, political leaders, trailblazing entrepreneurs and innovative philanthropists were among the people recognized for their contribution to California's history and culture.

The Latino Spirit Awards Ceremony was initiated by the Latino Caucus in commemoration of *Cinco de Mayo*. The ceremony is the Legislature's annual celebration recognizing successful Latinos. For nearly three hundred years, Mexicans and Latinos have had a fundamental role in the development of this great state. Never has California's Mexican Heritage been more significant than today. Latinos are poised to become the majority population in a state, which represents one of the world's largest economies.

"This event allows us to showcase a few of the many outstanding Latinos and reminds the community of the many contributions Latinos have made to our society. The honorees serve as role models for our Latino youth, they represent success, and are an inspiration to our community," said Latino Caucus Chair, Assemblymember Joe Coto.

The Latino Spirit Awards Ceremony was conducted on the Assembly Floor and culminated with an evening reception on the Capitol steps that was attended by the Capitol community.

The honorees recognized at this year's Latino Spirit Awards were:

**Gustavo Arellano** (Literature)

**Jim Plunkett** (Athletics & Community Service)

**Michael Torres** (Business & Community)

**Jaime Escalante** (Education)

**Vilma Martinez** (Human Rights)

**Daniel D. Villanueva** (Athletics & Business)

**Sal Castro** (Education & Community Action)

**Herman Gallegos** (Community Giving)

**Senator Richard Polanco** (*retired*) (Leadership & Public Support)

**Luis Valdez** (Literature & Theatre Arts)

**Jorge Castro** (Business & Community Giving)

**Ramona Delgado & Jennie Hernandez-Gin** (**WEAVE**) (Community Service)

**Nancy De Los Santos** (Cinematic Arts)

The Latino Heritage celebration provided an opportunity to meet and interact with the honorees and their families, as well as enjoy music by Gardenia Azul, mariachi music, cultural dancers, and authentic Mexican food provided by Juan in A Million. Honorees were also presented their Latino Spirit Award, an original art piece by Malaquias Montoya, entitled "El Cantor."

## “Through the Eyes of Justice”

The Latino Caucus was honored to have the Honorable Cruz Reynoso, a witty and dynamic speaker, highlight the April 2008 Latino Caucus Speaker Series. The Honorable Reynoso is recognized for his leadership in civil rights, education, immigration and refugee policy, government reform, administration of justice, and legal services for the indigent.

Reynoso, the first Latino to serve on the California Supreme Court (1982-1987), shared his judicial experience and discussed the current climate affecting Latinos in California. He also emphasized the responsibility California has in funding education.

Reynoso told the story of his childhood as one of 11 children of a farmworking family. His family was a victim of the unconstitutional deportations of the 1930's when the U.S. government illegally deported thousands of U.S. citizens of Mexican descent to Mexico. He pursued his education at Pomona College, served in

the U.S. Army and attended Boalt Hall where he received his law degree. He began his career in private law practice in El Centro, California. He served as a legislative assistant in the California State Senate in 1959 and 1960, and was appointed deputy director of the California Fair Employment Practices Commission in 1965.

He also stressed the shift in philosophy and shortsided thinking in government. He recalled the World War II war effort when everyone pitched in and was thrifty. Reynoso recalled a time when President John F. Kennedy declared “Ask not what your country can do for you, Ask what can you do for your country.” In times of conflict and hardship, Californians should embrace the idea that the citizenry must do something for the state and that may mean sacrificing some comforts.

Cruz Reynoso retired in 2006 and was honored with the UC Davis Medal. For a lifetime achievement at an event on Sept. 15, 2007.

## “Fun in the Sun”

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month. The Latino Caucus encourages everyone to perform monthly self-exams and seek a physician if any mole or growth looks suspicious.

According to a study published in a 2006 issue of *CANCER*, entitled “*Developing Epidemic of Melanoma in the Hispanic Population of California*,” the deadly skin cancer melanoma is increasing among Californians of Latino descent, especially men. The study found that between 1988 and 2001, the rate of invasive melanoma increased significantly among Latinos compared to Latinas and non-Latino whites since 1988.

The study recommended efforts be taken to target melanoma prevention. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, more than

90 percent of all skin cancers are caused by sun exposure. They offer the following tips:

- \*Seek the shade, especially between 10 am and 4 pm.
- \*Avoid tanning and UV tanning booths.
- \*Use a sunscreen with an [SPF](#) of 15 or higher every day.
- \*Do NOT burn.
- \*Apply 1 ounce (2 tablespoons) of sunscreen to your entire body 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours.
- \*Cover up with clothing, including a broad-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses.
- \*Keep newborns out of the sun.
- \*Sunscreens should be used on babies over the age of six months.
- \*Examine your skin head-to-toe every month.
- \*See your physician every year for a professional skin exam.

## Quote of the Month:

“Democracy is the destiny of humanity; freedom its indestructible arm.”

*John F. Kennedy*



Assemblymember Caballero and Jim Plunkett at the Spirit Awards breakfast.



Assemblymember Mendoza and Jaime Escalante at the Spirit Awards Breakfast.



Assemblymember Coto and Vilma Martinez.

Upcoming  
Events

**Tuesday, May 20**

Latino Caucus  
Members Only  
Meeting 10:30 am  
at the State Capital

**Thurs. & Friday,  
August 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>**

Latino Caucus  
Health Summit  
For more information,  
please contact :  
916-319-2023



Daniel Villanueva  
(former NFL Player)  
being interviewed by  
Univision at the  
Latino Spirit Awards  
Press Conference.



The Latino Spirit  
Award Honorees  
enjoyed a private  
lunch after the  
ceremony.



There were  
hundreds of people  
in attendance at the  
Latino Heritage  
Reception.

**LATINO CAUCUS and CCPOA Sponsored  
California's Juvenile Justice System: A Public Policy Initiatives  
Summit**



*(The Keynote Speaker at the Juvenile Justice was California  
Attorney General Jerry Brown)*

During the month of April, the Latino Caucus held its 4<sup>th</sup> policy summit in the City of Los Angeles. With the co-sponsorship by the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, we explored the issue of Juvenile Justice. At the summit, we once again had an opportunity to involve legislators from the Latino Caucus, Black Caucus, and the Asian Pacific Islander Caucus, community members, advocates and civic leaders to discuss an issue which disproportionately impacts people of color. Today two out of three children today involved in the juvenile justice system are Latino children.

Rocky Delgadillo, City Attorney of Los Angeles, painted a grim picture for the Members of the Legislature and attendees of the Summit on how this issue is affecting the youth of Los Angeles. He concluded by stating that the youthful offenders need an opportunity to be reintroduced into society and that they are not a lost cause.

On Friday, the first panel addressed the challenges that youthful offenders face. Ron Brown, a former NFL football player, stated that during his advocacy work in this field he has realized that a lot of these young men and women commit crimes to end up in juvenile centers to fill the void and gain a sense of belonging. Mr. Brown

stated that some youth go as far as to commit crimes near holiday weekends so that they might be around people who display affection towards them.

The second panel focused on Prevention, Intervention and Re-entry. A large part of the dialogue in this panel was focused on what needs to be done to ensure that youthful offenders do not re-enter. The justice system suggestions made by attendees were to provide skill development and opportunities for youth to enter the labor force. Often parolees are ostracized by employers because of the mistakes they made earlier in their lives. The rate of re-entry recidivism into the juvenile justice system is high.

The Juvenile Justice Summit was the Latino Caucus' fourth summit. It was a very successful and informative conference due in part to the attendance of our Members. The participation of juvenile justice experts, dynamic practitioners and civic leaders was also key. All were ready to discuss the courses of action that need to be taken during the 2008 Legislative Session to help reduce the levels of incarceration that our youth are experiencing. We must stop investing in incarcerating our youth and increase the amount of funding to educate youth.





## Geraldo Rivera Visits the State Capitol



In today's media climate of anti-immigrant propaganda, perpetuated by talking heads such as Lou Dobbs, Rush Limbaugh and Michael Savage, there is one "talking head" that stands apart – Geraldo Rivera.

On May 8, 2008, this world-renowned journalist addressed a capacity crowd at the State Capitol to present his recently published book, *His Panic: Why Americans Fear Hispanics in the U.S.*, Geraldo, who has been a fixture on television for over 40 years and currently hosts *Geraldo at Large* on Fox News Channel, has become a leading voice against what he describes as "anti-immigrant hysteria" throughout the United States.

As the son of a Puerto Rican immigrant father and Jewish mother, Geraldo Rivera understands first-hand the desire of immigrants to assimilate and achieve the American Dream. He also understands the long history of scapegoating immigrants dating back to the wave of Irish immigrants in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In his book, Geraldo confronts the growing

anti-immigrant rhetoric in our society. Much of it, according to Geraldo, is created and exacerbated by the media. Since the events of 9/11, prime time talk show hosts such as Lou Dobbs and Sean Hannity have blamed immigrants for society's ills to increase their ratings. Their one-sided representations of Latinos have both divided and demoralized the Latino community.

Geraldo Rivera has directly challenged their representations, publicly refuting their claims. In his address at the State Capitol, Geraldo challenged the audience to do the same.

His presentation was the third presentation of the year for the Latino Caucus Speaker Series, which is sponsored by the *California Latino Legislative Caucus*, the *California Latino Capitol Association* and *Comcast*. The series provides a much-needed voice for the Latino community, which has been underrepresented in the media for far too long. A recording of the presentation will be available on *Comcast On Demand* starting June 2008. Please contact Esmeralda Soria in the office of Senator Gilbert Cedillo at (916) 651-4022 for more information on the Speaker Series.



### WEB ADDRESS

<http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/LatinoCaucus/>

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### "La Verdad"

Children of color are disproportionately represented in both the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

- In California, there were 217,158 juvenile arrests in 2005.

- Of the estimated 16,782 youth in residential placement in California in 2003: 4,278 (25.5%) were Black, non-Latino; 8,208 (48.9%) were Latino; and, there were 1,604 youth under age 18 incarcerated in adult correctional facilities in California.

- California spends 3.8 times as much per prisoner as per public school pupil.



Assemblymember Nava participated at the Juvenile Justice Summit as a moderator.